NEWBOLT

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AT THE CROSS-ROADS

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CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AT THE CROSS-ROADS

(Addresses preached in St. Paul's Cathedral)

BY THE

REV. W. C. E. NEWBOLT, M.A.

CANON RESIDENTIARY AND CHANCELLOR OF ST. PAUL'S

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Being Five Addresses

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INTRODUCTION

THESE five chapters on Holy Marriage formed the substance, with but little alteration, of sermons preached at St. Paul's during the author's August Residence in 1920.

The great importance of the subject, more especially in view of recent attacks on this holy ordinance, whether in Parliament or elsewhere, seems to justify an attempt to rouse public opinion as to the great issues at stake; and to stimulate all to give either their vote, or at least the influence of their protest, in the cause of religion and morality, whose very foundations are being sapped in the name of liberty so-called, and the demand for a greater freedom to do wrong.

It is a vital question which concerns us all, and should appeal more especially to those who have the welfare and prosperity of their country at heart.

3, AMEN COURT,
St. Paul's, E.C.

W. C. E. NEWBOLT.

Christian Marriage at the Cross-Roads

I

SOCIETY

We read in the earliest records of the book of Genesis, "The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an helpmeet for him." [1] This was followed by the institution of Holy Marriage.

A little further on in the same book we read that "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose"; [2] and this was followed by the Flood.

It is a commonplace, now, that the very foundations of society are being threatened. There is turmoil and anarchy, selfish greed, lust, cruelty, false ideals, the corruption of good which is the worst form of bad. And in the world's shattered health the evil symptoms seem to gather into a head in the attack on family life, and notably on Holy Marriage, its sacred obligation, and on all that leads up to it.

There is the ordinance of God followed by the well-being of society; there is the wantonness of man followed by the flood. There are certain measures which from time to time come before Parliament; they are discussed, passed into law, or thrown out, as the case may be. We wonder at the

[1] Gen. ii. 18. [2] Gen. vi. 2.

political excitement and the wild passions which are aroused, but the questions seem to be remote from us, and we do not feel moved or interested. But when Parliament sets itself to alter, transform, and disfigure the laws which govern Holy Marriage, we feel that here is something which concerns us all. Our legislators are hammering away at the very keystone which holds together the arch of society, and it behoves us all who have the welfare of England at heart to contend for the old integrity of Christian marriage, and for the purity of home life.

We can only look around us to-day with feelings of disappointment ; the fruits of peace seem to be worse than the blight of war, and yet there could not be a greater mistake than to suppose that an outbreak of fever means necessarily an enfeebled constitution. Looking here and looking there, we may say there seems to be no progress. The discoveries of science, turned to the production of poison gas in warfare, may seem to be a parable of the world's material progress as affecting human welfare. But if we seem to have no Plato, no Aristotle, no Aristides, of even monotonous rectitude among us to-day, still we have in Christianity a possibility of perfection for every man such as he never had before. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."[1] The Christian state, could we but realise it, the Christian home, as we may see it again and again, offer ideals such as the world never saw before, and could not attain to without Christ.

Here it is, something which rises superior to race, to climate, which gives power to age and maturity to youth, which reserves some of the highest work even for invalids to do, and triumphs over heredity and environment in those who seem to be hopelessly bound by their straitening limitations.

And our great danger, to-day, seems to be the growth of

[1] 2 Cor. v. 17.

a spirit of selfishness, leading us to act as if we were turned loose into some rich garden, where each must snatch for himself all that he is able to reach. As if the sun shone for him alone, and the earth brought forth her fruits only for his growth and perfection; a place in which a man must push and elbow his way, working for gain, not for the excellence of the work itself; a place where he may live unloved and die undesired, provided that he gets on.

It is told us in the old story, to which our Blessed Lord Himself points us. What does it matter, if it is pleasant to the eyes? If it is unlawful, still it is good for food. If it runs counter to the will of God, still in that way lies worldly wisdom. Nevertheless, we are running counter to the will of God, and we are beginning to find it out. "He that findeth his life shall lose it." [1]

There are things which money cannot buy, and it is God's work which we have to do with our human effort, and to think of Him first, and our own interests last.

It is a law of God, and we cannot make way against it, even if we would. "We are members one of another." [2]

Again and again association with others is insisted on. The ancient world realised it. Aristotle, "the master of them that know," said, "Man by nature is a social being." He who lives alone, the solitary, "is either a beast or a god"—meaning that he is not a normal man.

We first open our eyes in the surroundings of a family; we find ourselves in our approach to God members of a Church; we belong to some community or parish; we are sons and daughters of an Empire. All this is regulated by home duties. The Church lays its obligations upon us, and the State lays its burdens; we cannot, if we would, pass through life in selfish indifference to our fellow-men.

And it is when men have recognised this, and have risen to the full knowledge of its significance, that we see some of

[1] St. Matt. x. 39. [2] Eph. iv. 25.

the most beautiful developments of human life. The life of the family is a thing of which we are very proud here in England. Community life in religious bodies has proved itself to be a fruitful and beneficent power for good. We have seen again, quite recently, the noble deeds which can be enterprised in obedience to the national call or in the spirit of patriotism. And day by day the conflicts and discussions which arise, the passionate pursuit of reforms, the recent demands for a greater measure of self-government, all tend to show the appeal which the Church as a body makes to its members.

Still, there is always a danger of losing ourselves in large abstractions, such as the Church, the Nation, the Community, and so it is well from time to time to look more narrowly and more closely at some of these traditional blessings which they enshrine, to take them out of the treasury of the public body, and see whether they are safe, in full, vital power, and honourable efficiency; for it sometimes happens that we find ourselves in danger of losing some valuable treasures whose importance we had not realised, and whose safety we had taken for granted, under pressure of so-called Reform and the demands of a loose public opinion.

It is, then, the object of these chapters to enquire more closely into what is meant by Christian Marriage, one of the Church's greatest treasures. What is its origin; what is its sanction; what it establishes; what it signifies; what duties it imposes; and the home which it looks forward to, hereafter, eternal in the heavens.

I

It may be asserted with emphasis that marriage does not take its rise in prudential or economic considerations, however much these may be looked upon as regulating

safeguards, but in love, a power commonly degraded in the conception of heathenism, from the fabled gods, who revelled in wickedness, down to the votary of what was believed to be irresistible passion; but on the other hand a power elevated by Christianity into one of its most vital principles, itself a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and a distinctive and essential badge of the Christian profession.

Man, as it were, improves and enlarges upon the social instinct. He is not content to be a Churchman merely, a citizen, a native of a country, a member of a family; he seeks to narrow and to deepen; he seeks a friend, he seeks, ultimately, it may be, a wife.

And these friends, and these companions, and this wife or husband have to be sought out of what is known as society, the common life, that is, in which men and women move and walk, with its duties, its pleasures, its joys or its sorrows, its rules and regulations, its etiquette, its rewards and punishments, its favour or its frown.

It obviously makes a great difference whether the partner for life is taken out of the Garden of Paradise from the hand of God, or from the world before the Flood at the call of desire, when the sons of God are chiefly concerned to find that the daughters of men whom they look on are fair.

We must face the matter fairly and plainly. Is society, to-day, a good place in which to find the wife or the husband? Is it Paradise, or is it the world toppling towards the Flood? And if we ask ourselves this question, it is not in a hopeless, academic sort of way, as a question which is being decided for us. Society is, after all, what we make it. Where good people combine to stop what is merely even undesirable, stopped it is; and evil only flourishes by the apathy or connivance of those who censure without correcting, or deplore without removing.

In any consideration of marriage, surely the first

question must be, Are we bringing up men and women to whom marriage will be the elevating and dignifying of a refined and beautiful life? Or are we watching with indifference the spread of principles which cannot contemplate marriage without the possibility of divorce?—while we witness the development of men and women who will only bring to that "holy estate" frivolous and evil lives, unblessed by the sanctities of religion: those who have hovered about as the butterflies of society, not as the strong citizens, the uncorrupt fathers and mothers of the age yet to be.

II

Let us look, then, at the individual citizen, at the member of society who moves up and down in it, the ordinary man of the world.

It is idle to say that things are satisfactory. If squalor and untidiness and signs of poverty were the predominant features, society would right itself. But to-day there would seem to be, as far as the outward eye can see, a moral squalor which does not shock, and a lack of the sense of beauty which produces no dissatisfaction. Beauty, however, is a thing which we cannot part with, without distinct loss and harm. For in itself it is both a mystery and a marvel. It is not easy to say offhand why we should admire things, not only because they are good and useful, but because they are beautiful.

God Himself is not only good and beneficent, but He is glorious, and so the Church, falling down in adoration, says, "We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory." [1]

But is beauty stamped on the face of society to-day? Can painted cheeks ever be beautiful? Is it not the

[1] Service of Holy Communion, Prayer Book.

difference between an artificial flower from the shop, and a glorious growth from the garden ? Can much of the present dress ever be beautiful, even when it is not suggestive ?

Or words again, in language both spoken and written—Does there not seem to be a conspiracy to rob it of its beauty and disfigure it with expressions chosen because they are undignified and tend to mock seriousness ?

And what is to be said of action ? They must judge for themselves who take pleasure in reading the reports of the Divorce Court as they appear in the newspapers with a prominence and profusion which indicate a demand.

But here is the region from which friendships are made, and marriage engagements are enterprised.

We hear a good deal to-day about eugenics ; that is to say, there is a desire that those who are married should be in certain specified ways proper fathers and mothers of the race.

But is there not a science of spiritual eugenics as well ? Do we not need a greater seriousness, a greater love of beauty for its own sake, a greater refinement in society, more of Paradise and less of the world before the Flood ?

Let each one think that every folly, every sin, every shortcoming in our lives tends to incapacitate us for the higher developments to which God may be calling us, be we married or single. We dare not trade on the forgiving bounty of God, or take liberties, as it were, with His forgiveness.

> " Wounds, though healed, will ache and make confession.
> We are not what we were before transgression."

It is of the very last importance that we should do more than look on with a cynical criticism at the ways of society, but rather resolve that here is one thing that we can do for its purification. " Whom shall I send ? " says God. " And who will go for us ? " " Here am I," let us answer ;

"send me." [1] Society shall be the better for at least one earnest man, or steadfast woman.

But society falls into groups. Individuals form friendships, they marry. Friendship is in itself a solemn chapter in the history of the world. The companionship of married life is a more solemn chapter still.

We have in Holy Scripture the beautiful friendship of David and Jonathan; we read that "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." [2] We have also the lurid history of Samson and Delilah, the unworthy friendship ending in a deadly union.[3] We read in many a biography which is in our hands to-day of a wife who seemed to form part of the husband's life; of the husband who found in her whom he had married the very complement of his existence.

Browning has gathered for us out of history the grim tragedy of Andrea-del-Sarto, the God-inspired painter, who found in the unworthy partner of his life only the hindrance to his aspirations, and the bar to his higher flights of genius:

> "Had I been two, another and myself,
> Our head would have o'erlooked the world." [4]

It is a more solemn question than it seems, and has a bearing on marriage which we cannot overestimate—the principles which govern the formation of friendships and the causes which result in attraction.

Philosophers have discussed these things and have formulated theories; and yet it would be difficult to regulate and measure these secret springs which seem sometimes only to be the wayward impulses of irresponsible fancy or desire.

Sometimes it is the work of a moment, sometimes it is

[1] Isa. vi. 8. [2] 1 Sam. xviii. 1. [3] Judges xvi.
[4] Browning, *Andrea del Sarto.*

the gradual process of years. Sometimes it is the hope of mutual advantage ; sometimes it is the prospect of pleasure mutually shared : in any case it is the hope and promise of sympathy.

But choice is a thing which may be educated and directed. We have now, for the most part, put on one side the alliance openly advocated for the sake of wealth, or enhanced position in the world. The passing satisfaction of a whim or caprice is looked upon with contemptuous pity. But still acquaintance ripens into companionship, and companionship into friendship, and friendship into marriage, and so the question becomes one of fundamental importance, as we each contribute our portion to that strange world of society. What are we doing to set loving and hating on the right level ? What are we doing to raise values ? What are we doing to make manhood more manly and womanhood more womanly ? So that men and women shall see the best in each other, and that life shall assume its right proportion in the heads of families, as in those who are to be the future fathers and mothers of the age.

First and foremost, we all must seek to bring religion back into an honourable place in social life.

Sunday observance and the reading of the Bible are two things which are being ousted by the week-end and the Sunday newspapers. Sunday must be once more put in an honourable place. When the bells ring out for church in the village near the big house where there is gathered the large party of visitors, it should not be regarded merely as the call to the women and children and the scrupulous who reluctantly pay an unwelcome duty, to the ill-concealed scorn of the indolent idler or the temporary agnostic. We are losing the sense of religion out of life, so that instead of seeking a deep well-spring of religion in those whose companionship we fain would secure, we regard such things

rather as something hidden, as a matter not to be talked about or displayed, as a thing to be apologised for, or even to be ashamed of One is tempted sometimes to look back to the dark days of the family pew, where the whole household would assemble on Sundays, bringing with them the stranger that was within their gates to pay a solemn act of duty to Almighty God.

The memory is still green of a famous London vicar [1] (who afterwards became a bishop) whose influence for good in his West End parish among all classes of society has never been equalled. He, without affectation or sense of strangeness, could pass from conversation to prayer without any effort or sense of incongruity in those with whom he was associated. So now we desire that religion should take a more definite place, that it should be honoured and welcomed, not timidly assumed if it is present, or complacently ignored if it is absent.

Surely this ought to be the first question, not, " Is the companion of my life that is to be, good-looking, wealthy or accomplished ? " but, " Is she religious ? " " Is this a man who will bring me nearer God, one who in all his ways acknowledges Him, while He directs his paths ? "

We need more religion, a religion more honoured and welcome in the lives of those who, perhaps unknown to themselves, are offering attraction, inviting friendships, preparing the way for, laying the foundations of that home life on which England's true prosperity depends.

Further, there is an intense need for greater seriousness. Life is too solemn a thing to be frittered away on unworthy objects.

It is strange to notice how much English character has been formed by its amusements, and how we have as a nation developed from most unlikely sources sterling virtues of abiding worth. From the day when Drake left

[1] Bishop Wilkinson.

his game of bowls which he was playing on the Hoe at Plymouth to fight the Spanish Armada, down to the present day, when "good cricket" seems to be taken as a synonym for upright, straightforward action. We felt, as we saw the gallant chivalry of our army and navy in the face of the most degrading brutality, that there were things which could be decided by generous instinct, before the governing principles of morality were even touched—as things which no gentleman could do.

Are we getting frivolous? Is it possible to spend hour after hour in unworthy pursuits, or games of chance, or effeminate idleness, without losing fibre of character?

We desire that the men and women from whom England is to be built up should be serious, should be reverent, should fear God and honour man, should take note of big things and high aspirations, should love the true, the beautiful and the good; that they should not be as a man who parodies the Bible or mocks at great aspirations, who is as one who scribbles his name on the Great Pyramid or thinks the highest aims of music to be reached in the banalities of a comic song.

And we seek, once more, to find in society the dignity of achievement, something accomplished, something done. There are great works waiting to be taken up, great improvements waiting to be enterprised, great wrongs and great evils waiting to be put right.

In the curious old days of romance we read of the Queen of Beauty ready to present the crown of honour to him who had carried out the worthy achievement. In those days the royal princess herself was to be the prize, to be given in honourable marriage to the knight who by his prowess had proved himself to be worthy of her.

To-day society needs almost more than anything else the honourable competition of men and women in good works. Thank God there is abundant evidence that this

is being more and more felt. Look only at the devoted lives of many women to-day in the different schemes of practical benevolence for which this age is proudly distinguished, in hospitals, in places of education, in houses of charity, in penitentiaries, in the manifold schemes of usefulness and benevolence.

Look again and see how men are showing themselves to be full of generous zeal for those things which tend to elevation of character and the permanent good of mankind. Such things give hope that what is generous, noble, and good will assert itself over what is frivolous, bad, and unworthy. Surely there is a reasonable prospect that all this dissolute love of pleasure, this corruption of manners and selfish indulgence will pass away, and that the typical man and the typical woman of the day from whose marriage will be formed the England that is to be, will be the earnest, the devoted, the unselfish, the enthusiastic, the diligent, the wide-looking members of society; yes, even more shall be those who have learned what our Blessed Lord meant when He said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you," [1] as being those who have learned that philanthropy without religion has not attained to its highest powers.

In the works of the famous novelist of the last century,[2] which are still read almost as classics; from the first chapter to the last, there would seem to be a long scheme of adventure on the part of the heroines as to how they were to secure a partner for life—and that a life for the most part shut off from any participation in the great world-conflict raging outside the monotony of their own lives. It was doubtless a faithful record of much of the social life of those times, but surely the tournaments and the Queen of Beauty and the knight of prowess were better than this. To-day all is changed; almost every village has its tournament

[1] St. Matt. vi. 33. [2] Miss Austen.

lists where good fights with evil, and men and women vie with each other in the intense ardour of conflict.

This condition of things has also its dangers, which it is not necessary to elaborate.

Men and women have each their own weapons which they may not put aside. We despise our effeminate man, but what are we to say about the masculine woman ?

It is possible, alas ! for women to cast on one side their own particular excellencies as women, while they gain none of the distinctive excellencies of men.

Here once more is the great arena of life in which are to be found the husbands and wives of the England that is to be. Here is earnestness, here is sterling worth, here we like to think of religion as it were some great church with its open doors dominating the market-place. Here the men and women workers go in and out and find shelter and strength in their work. It has helped them all through in their daily life ; it seems to be only natural that they should kneel before its altar and combine the efforts of their lives in those solemn bonds of Holy Matrimony which can never be severed. Whereas, outside them, as it were, in the streets that run round the area of their activity, there is the ceaselessly moving crowd who pass along the broad way of irresponsible life, treading underfoot the solemn obligations which God has laid upon them.

There is the laughter which has no joy in it and the sorrow which has no merit. Here is the restless movement which produces no work and the forces which only minister to decay. At the end there is the music-hall and at the best the divorce judge.

Here are those who have never learned the great truth, " He that loveth his life shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." [1]

God grant that a purified society, strong in religious

[1] St. John xii. 25.

truth, may ever send forth into the great world of activity and progress, with all its sore needs and troubles, those who may be the fathers and mothers of an England who, while proud of her great traditions, reaches forth into aspirations of even greater glory, and achievements yet to come.

II

HOLY MARRIAGE AND ITS ENEMIES

It is a wild scene which we look out upon to-day in the civilised world. A powerful nation has deliberately attempted to dethrone Christ, and to substitute a new Gospel of Culture for the old and worn-out precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. Self-assertion is to take the place of inglorious meekness, and self-advancement to push on one side the love of our neighbour. There it is still raging, this wild self-assertion and insolent contempt of Christianity. The battle is loud and fierce. We cannot deny it. Men are adoring what they burned and burning what they adored in more senses than one; and one of the most dangerous and significant signs of the times is the fact that the waves of evil are encircling and engulfing many fair fields of conquest which the ages of Faith had won for the world.

There are few accepted facts of faith and religion, and of morality also, which are not challenged; and even more, we have begun to distrust our weapons, our methods of warfare and our roads to victory. Men are asking (and these, too, religious men), Do we need the Church? Do we need bishops? Do we need sacraments? Cannot we devise a better Bible, cannot we proclaim a simpler Faith? Coming closer than this and looking at home, is there that loyalty to the Church of England which the older of us can remember? Is there the desire to see a noble English

Rite, which is not an eclectic patchwork gathered from what is grandiloquently called "the rest of the Western Church," by a process of private judgment which no other society could for a moment tolerate?

The world abroad and at home is bristling with anarchy and disorder of every kind. Surely it is for us, each in our several spheres, to stick to principles and discard fancies. Let us hasten the removing of those things that are shaken; the unworthy and flimsy conceptions of a restless age, "that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." [1]

And as we look round about upon the storm-tossed waters, we are at once face to face with the great and important subject which it is the design of these chapters to consider, namely, Holy Marriage, the one sacrament ordained before sin entered the world. And not because of sin: an ordinance as old as the world, an institution which our Blessed Lord Himself in His discourses took up and stripped of the base excrescences which had gathered upon it during the lapse of ages, and took it back to the beginning when these things were not so.

Here is something which Christianity has boldly to face, whether in countries debased by an advanced civilisation which has forgotten the simple principles of the Gospel, or in the regions where the advanced lines of the Church are in battle with heathenism, where polygamy and sexual degradation penetrate to the very life of the nations, finding out that in the tampering with Holy Marriage lies one of the most crucial difficulties with which Christianity has to contend.

And here we are to-day in Christian England face to face with a great wave of immorality which is one of the legacies of the late hateful war; and in the very stress and strain of this, which is wearing out the strength of Christian en-

[1] Heb. xii. 27.

deavour; at a time when men and women who have devoted themselves to the cause of purity are beginning to faint and fail under the weight of a hostile or indifferent public opinion; at a moment when a misguided softness forbids us even to talk of penitentiaries, which build up again the fallen, but urges us rather to whitewash the deadly stain with a veneer of culture and civilisation—in the face of all this—an attack is being made on the very foundation of our English social life in an enlarged and simplified scheme of divorce, which is calculated to undermine and destroy the sanctity and beauty of that great and unspeakable blessing known as Christian Marriage; an attack fraught with moral and spiritual danger, and which if successful can only end in the subversion of the English home, and the most cherished traditions of our race.

What, then, is Christian Marriage?

It is, in the wider sense of the word, a sacrament, which is one translation of the words of St. Paul, where he says, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." [1] It is a sacrament (as indeed it is called in the Book of the Homilies [2]) in a general acceptation of the name, where it is attributed to anything "whereby an holy thing is signified." For it is a symbolical act, implying a union unlike any other in the world, signifying, as St. Paul points out to us, an image or symbol of the union of Christ with His Church.

As Christ left His glory and henceforth took upon Himself human nature, thus possessing two Natures in one Person, so the man and the woman, being two, forsake the natural setting of life and become one, pointing on further to the sacramental union of Christ with His Church which again is elaborated in the vision of the Lamb's wife vouchsafed

[1] Eph. v. 32.

[2] Homily on Common Prayer and the Sacraments.

to St. John in the book of the Revelation,[1] speaking mystically of the transmission of life from the heavenly Bridegroom to the Bride, and of the offspring which is of the two.

So that practically we should answer any question which enquires as to what marriage is in its essence, by saying that marriage is a state entered into by contract.

The contract is not marriage, but makes it ; and when it has made it, it has nothing more that it can do. The contracting act is fleeting, the resulting state is abiding. It is like the state of fatherhood or sonship contracted by an act, but lasting for ever. It is made once for all until death. The prodigal son may go into the most remote regions of profligacy ; his father may refuse to welcome him, or to bring out the fatted calf of reconciliation ; still he is the father of the lad and the lad is his son. No bad conduct can alter that relationship. And so it is with man and woman : once married, they are always married, the only essentials being the formal consent of two persons who are free to contract marriage before a competent witness, either in church or at a registry office, this consent being mutual, deliberate, and voluntary, externally shown, and a consent at the same time which is more than a promise, inasmuch as it takes place at once.

And so marriage is the union of the whole man and the whole woman into a complete and undivided unity. It is a duality in unity. "He . . . called their name" (not names) "Adam, in the day when they were created."[2] And the function of the Church is to give that which no registry office nor private official can give, namely, the blessing of God to enable the newly-married pair to carry out "the vow and covenant betwixt them made."

And so the Prayer Book says at the end of the Form of the Solemnisation of Matrimony, "It is convenient that the

[1] Rev. xxi. 9. [2] Gen. v. 2.

new-married persons should receive the Holy Communion at the time of their marriage, or at the first opportunity after their marriage." [1]

There is no need to draw attention to the fact that Christian marriage is an act of extreme solemnity.

There is hardly any other service in the Prayer Book which speaks in so serious and even stern a voice. It must often be a startling reminder to those who approach this holy rite without due thought or preparation. It must often sound even harshly severe, amidst the light talk, the gay dresses, the music and the flowers which are the ordinary accompaniments of a wedding; while to those who are serious and thoughtful, who realise the absolute importance of the step which they are taking, the mingled warnings and blessings which hang around the words of contract, opening up as they do visions of possibilities and of sorrow as well as joy, are full of sobering and strengthening considerations.

No one who wishes to enter aright into the holy estate of matrimony should read the Marriage Service for the first time in church on his wedding-day.

Two attacks, at this present moment, are being made on this bulwark of society, the one direct and the other indirect, both of which tend to degrade its sanctity and lower its dignity.

The first is the endeavour to enlarge the sphere and possibilities of divorce by increased facilities of procuring it, and enlarged causes for application to the divorce judge.

As to divorce itself, that is, the separation of the married man and woman by outside legal authority, two sorts of separation are practised. The one is known as divorce *a thoro et mensâ,*" or what is called judicial separation, the other is known as divorce "*a vinculo matrimonii,*" which professes itself capable of severing the marriage bond and

[1] Book of Common Prayer.

making the man and the woman free from all responsibility as if they had never been married ; so that each should be entitled, if they so desired, to enter on a fresh marriage without fear of legal consequences.

As to the first of these, known as judicial separation by agreement, however undesirable in itself this may be, the Church has nothing to say in the way of absolute prohibition. Indeed, such a separation is recognised in the 107th Canon in these words : " In all sentences pronounced only for divorce and separation *a thoro et mensâ*, there shall be a caution and restraint inserted in the act of the said sentence, that the parties so separated shall live chastely and continently: neither shall they, during each other's life, contract matrimony with any other person."

It may be that some poor woman has found herself united for life to some fiend in human shape who calls himself her husband, with whom her very life is in danger. It may be that a man finds himself bound in these strict ties, for better or for worse, to that which is indeed the worse, an unworthy wife, the Delilah of all that consecrated him to God and worthy enterprise.

Here, where there is no pretence of severing the marriage bond by an irrevocable decree, opportunity is given and is often accepted between man and wife of composing minor differences and passing quarrels, and so coming together again in a wise and considered reconciliation. The harm done is transitory, admitting of a remedy, which for the hardness of men's hearts may well be allowed by the Church, however undesirable in itself.

But in the year 1857 an Act of Parliament was passed empowering a high officer of the law to pronounce a divorce *a vinculo matrimonii* ; that is, to sever the marriage bond. That is to say, those who had been married, who in the solemn rites of the Church, at all events, had plighted their troth either to other, pledging themselves to a union for

life, those whose hands had been joined by the priest with these solemn words, "Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder"; those over whose heads had been said the prayer, "O God, who . . . didst teach that it should never be lawful to put asunder those whom Thou by Matrimony hadst made one," were to be assured that what God Almighty would never sanction the divorce judge could easily accomplish.

In divorce a man puts asunder those whom God has made one, a tie of binding force lies loosened and broken. The husband ceases to be a husband, and the wife ceases to be a wife, and the children, if there be any, become the puzzled playthings of litigation.

It is not to be wondered at if the Church thinks this to be impossible, and asserts with unwavering voice that the marriage tie is indissoluble except by death. And if it were possible, all experience shows that a system of divorce is a deadly blow to Christian morality.

Apart from the obvious evils which result from it, there have been found to follow in its train such things as dishonest collusion between the parties, perjury, and an ever-increasing temptation both to husband and wife to be unfaithful to each other.

Now it is this court of divorce, with all its dangers and impossibilities, which a loose public opinion is trying to set up on a wide and extended basis.

Divorce in the case of incompatibility of temper between the two parties, or where separation has been caused by long illness, or by the absence of one party abroad, and indeed, divorce for every trivial case, is bound to follow.

If the marriage tie is dissoluble, relief will be sought, as seems to have been the case in times of Jewish laxity, "for every cause."

What, then, does the Bible say on this subject? What does our Blessed Lord say?

There are four passages in the Gospels dealing with divorce. In two of them our Blessed Lord spoke on the subject at some length in public, and afterwards explained it to His disciples in private. [1]

St. Paul also dwells on it three times in his epistles, namely in his Epistle to the Romans, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians and in the Epistle to the Ephesians. [2]

From these passages in the New Testament it would seem to be quite clear that the Church holds marriage to be generally indissoluble; that to marry a divorced person is to commit adultery, because the woman is still a wife and the man is still a husband, and putting away does not annul marriage. As is well known, in two of the passages mentioned above our Blessed Lord seems to make an exception. In the second of them the text is so uncertain that in the opinion of scholars no definite conclusion can be based upon it.[3] The first of them runs thus: "It hath been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." [4]

Here surely we have a reference to the first and admissible views of divorce, which has been alluded to above, namely, judicial separation. A man may separate from his wife if she has been found to have been an incontinent sinner. To put her away for any cause but this would put her in the way of temptation to adultery, and the guilt would lie at the husband's door. And whosoever marries a divorced woman, without exception commits adultery, because she is already married.

Hence the law of the Church is absolute; innocent

[1] St. Matt. v. 31, xix. 3-9; St. Mark x. 2-12; St. Luke xvi. 18.
[2] Rom. vii. 1-4; 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11, 39; Eph. v. 22-32.
[3] St. Matt. xix. 3-9. [4] St. Matt. v. 31, 32.

party or not innocent party, the marriage bond is indissoluble.

Moral guilt may be a ground for separation, in some cases, but for divorce never. For no such thing is possible

The other attack which is being made to-day on the sanctity of marriage is not scientific but indirect in a general looseness of sexual morality, and in the breaking down of modesty and self-restraint.

The Church always speaks of Matrimony as holy. The world of to-day surrounds it and approaches it with low estimates, foolish jests, unworthy frivolity, and ill-disguised sensuality.

The society-novel vies with the popular play in surrounding it with appeals to what is unworthy and base in human nature, and expresses only too clearly the degraded state of morality which at the moment seems to prevail.

There can be but one feeling for those who have been led astray and have lost woman's most priceless gift of purity. No one can fail, who thinks at all, to grieve for those who, scarce knowing what they do, cast down, to be trampled underfoot, those grand conceptions of womanhood, wife and motherhood. To speak of them as "the unmarried mothers" of society is not really to lift them up out of the deadly abyss into which they have fallen. When Christ refused to condemn the poor woman taken in adultery and to associate Himself with those whose justice knew no compassion, while they apparently condoned vice so long as it was undetected—still, as He sent her away it was with a fixed recognition of her state. His words to her were: "Go and sin no more." [1] She was a sinner and had sinned, and if her life was to be renewed, it must be a life of penitence and amendment.

The author of *Faust* has portrayed for us in matchless

[1] St. John viii. 11.

words the anguish of the poor fallen maid when trying once more to take part in the great solemnity of the Church's requiem for the dead.

She finds the words which once braced her innocence now full only of terror and of judgment, as she faints away in the unspeakable anguish of her conscious sin.

It is a terrible sign of the depravity of the present day that again and again appeals have to be made with great urgency to maintain certain Homes which it has been found necessary to enterprise for "Fallen Children." And alas! the need for these seems to be increasing. It is almost incredible, but so it is, that children need protecting, and quite young girls need rescuing from themselves and from their enemies in the seething mass of corruption which seems to be let loose upon us.

A low estimate of Holy Marriage acts and reacts upon public opinion, and if we are not careful we may drift back to the worst days of paganism.

Rescue workers and preventive workers move up and down among us on this battlefield swept by the devil, the world, and the flesh. Little encouraged, little recognised, they still cling firmly to the belief which long experience has taught them, that a state such as this can only be remedied by the recognition of penitence in all its deep significance, as the only hope of a restoration to better things in those who have fallen down wounded in the battle.

Civilising influences, refining processes, a veneer of repectability, an endeavour to forget the past will not effect it.

Both in the individual and in society, any transgression against the laws of God in matters which concern the reproduction of life and the transmission of the race of God's children is punished with a severity which shows that the way to Holy Marriage must be guarded as by an angel with

"a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." [1]

For Holy Marriage is a sacred and wonderful thing. It is, as has been seen, the very foundation of society. The Christian home is not only the pride and glory of our land, it is also the very bulwark of the nation. Here, in learning to rule his own house, a man is learning the rules of discipline which prevail in the house of God.[2] Here he learns lessons of unselfishness and detachment. Here he learns the virtues of obedience and sympathy. Here he learns something of the mystery which found a place for home on Calvary, which led the Lord Jesus in the midst of that great atoning sacrifice to find a shelter of refuge and consolation for His mother.

Here it stands, setting forth sacramentally the union of Christ with His Church.

And what sort of union is this? What does Christ do for the Church, His Bride? He "gave Himself for it," [3] so we are told. Do we think enough of the self-denial which ought to be such a characteristic of the married state, where a man has to live entirely for someone else, in so far as this is compatible with his public duties?

It may well be that young men and young women, who have no particular tie laid upon them, no call on their constant sympathy, who can move about as they like and enjoy themselves, know little of the ennobling influence on character which is the result of thus constantly living for another.

Unselfishness is one of the most beautiful and most distinctive of all Christian graces. And here it can be developed in the highest perfection, as in a state when a man so acts, without even stopping to applaud himself, because it is the normal action of a devoted life.

[1] Gen. iii. 24. [2] 1 Tim. iii. 5.
[3] See Marriage Service.

In all the trials and sorrows, as well as in all the joys of married life, it is a grand thing that the man and wife should learn to live each for the other, and both together for the home.

And we are told, further, that the union of Christ with His Church is that "He might sanctify it."[1] Here is a rivalry for each to see how they can make each the other better than themselves. The husband to elevate the wife, through Martha's duties to Mary's love. The wife to urge her husband on ever higher; to set him free for his duties, to encourage him, to cheer him and make him a noble man. Let us think of her whose claim to honour in the Holy Scriptures is simply this, that she helped others while sinking her own personality. She is called "the other Mary."[2] Just that. No blessed Mother of God with angel herald to welcome her. Not even an interesting penitent like the Magdalene, but the mother of good sons such as James and Joses (and James may have owed to her upbringing his title of "the Just."). Simply the wife of a good man, Cleophas.

"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

"She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

"She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

"She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar."

"She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

"Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

[1] Exhortation, Marriage Service. [2] St. Matt. xxvii. 61.

"Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

"Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

"Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates." [1]

And even more we are told that Christ Jesus "cherishes" His Church. [2] This is the gift which God bestows on those who seek His blessing in this holy union. Someone to cherish, someone to love, someone with whom life's good things and troubles may be shared unto the end.

There are pure and bright experiences which open out from the marriage union at the altar.

It is not that there are no dark days. There are difficulties, trials, and disappointments in the happiest life. But the shadow of the divorce court, the selfish refusal to share the burden of life with each other, combined with a wilful and unbalanced frivolity—these are the dark enemies which God's blessing is at hand to disperse.

Here is a blessing which we wish to preserve for the generations yet to come, for the fathers and mothers of England yet to be, for the husbands and wives who maintain the sacred traditions of our Christian Faith.

And while we think of divorce as the great blow struck against the marriage union, we must not forget that this rift in the integrity of the sacrament is already spreading further in the sanction by the State of unions contracted in defiance of the Christian laws of affinity. Already the prohibition of such a marriage in the case of a sister-in-law is removed; and now also in the case of the brother-in-law a further relaxation is imminent. And so the integrity of our marriage laws tends to become more and more impaired.

Parliament may pass its Divorce Bills, ungodliness may

[1] Prov. xxxi. 10-14, 27-31.

[2] Exhortation, Marriage Service.

lift up its head in the licence of unrestrained wilfulness, but the great heart of England will still remain sound while the blessing of God rests upon its Christian homes, on the men and women who in their own lives have sought first His kingdom and His righteousness, and have found all other things added unto them.

III

THE CAUSES OF HOLY MARRIAGE

THE State laws which regulate marriages are strict and severe. Those who wish to be married, and the clergy who celebrate the marriages, have to pay a very close regard to the law of the land which is enforced under pains and penalties. These regulations seem to show that even viewed on the side of the State, marriage is a very serious thing, not to be enterprised "lightly or wantonly," [1] but with due care and restriction; while the warnings and provision of the Church are even stronger, so that the Marriage Service of the Prayer Book stands out in almost ironical contrast with the light tone which is the characteristic of a modern wedding.

If we ask, why is this extreme caution and solemnity insisted on? it is because marriage has to do with fundamentals, it touches the very cornerstone of society.

In dealing with any great fabric we have to be careful in seeing what we do with the foundations.

Marriage is the foundation of the home, and the home is the basis of the City. And the cities, towns, and villages rear up that great building which we know indefinitely as "the Country," for which men live and for which they die in all the enthusiasm of patriotism.

When the mighty Roman Empire, the mistress of the world, pushed far and wide the power of her annexations,

[1] Marriage Service Preface.

she made and consolidated the additions to her empire by planting down colonies, each carrying the sacred fire from the home-altar, each, as it were, a part of the Roman Empire, aflame with imperial zeal. So Christ extends the boundaries of His empire in this land by planting down Christian homes each enkindled with a Christian life, destined to be the hope and stay of a God-fearing nation.

Holy marriage is the gate which leads to the Christian home, and therefore the State protects it and the Church consecrates it. It is "a holy estate," we proclaim, "an honourable estate instituted of God in the times of man's innocency." [1]

Christ honoured it by His first miracle; St. Paul commended it, and showed how it should be regulated; and to this day, wherever the Gospel is preached, it is regarded as in some sense a sacrament, a sign of something higher than itself.

Now we are told in the Prayer Book that the objects of Holy Marriage are threefold. It was ordained for the rearing of the family; it was designed to help mankind against sin; and it was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity. In fact, for all the joy and protection which are to be derived from the Christian home.

Some would say, following the account in Genesis,[2] that its first object is mutual help and social life. Others would say that much has happened since then, and that the founding of the family must always be the first care; while it is not possible also to disregard the danger of sin and the ravages of ill-regulated desire.

In saying thus much, it is necessary to note, in passing, that while we honour in every way we can the holy estate

[1] See Prayer Book, Marriage Service.

[2] Gen. ii. 18.

of matrimony, there is another state which has always been held in great honour, and has its share in the welfare of the body politic, and that is the condition known as virginity, celibacy, or simply the single state, which has behind it a great history in its relations to the Church and Realm. We must not think for one moment that the single state is a matter of pure accident, or a thing to be deplored, or regarded as of less value and interest than the married state.

All experience denies this. St. Paul has some strong words as to the unbiassed, valuable, and unselfish work that the unmarried can do for the Church. He goes so far as to say, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife." [1]

But beyond this, beyond this state which to many seems to be ordered by chance or circumstance, but is really part of the will of God for His servants, there is the state deliberately chosen known as virginity or celibacy.

Our Blessed Lord Himself speaks of such a state with approval when undertaken for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. [2]

He says or implies that some are able to receive this dispensation, some are not. And there have always been, and there are those to-day who deliberately choose this state for the kingdom of heaven's sake. While He would say that it was not to be regarded as the better part for all, yet such a life may be useful in times of distress, in the mission-field, in cases of especial call, and in cases of deliberate self-dedication.

He Himself once more seemed to honour the virgin-state in the case of the beloved disciple St. John, in His great forerunner St. John Baptist; and there are mysterious

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 32, 33. [2] St. Matt. xix. 12.

sayings in the writings of St. John as to those who "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." [1] Only let us remember, both in the one state and in the other, the condition of life so chosen must be "for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

And obviously there is a great difference between the man or woman who has deliberately enterprised the single state for the sake of religion, and those who have merely shrunk from responsibility, or have followed selfish inclination, while they drift along, directed, as they would fain believe, by chance.

To return, then, to the causes for which marriage should be undertaken: "the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of His holy Name" [2] must always take a high place.

This is a difficult subject, and one which cannot be discussed publicly without some risk, important as it is.

This, however, may be said, and perhaps should be insisted on, namely, that no one can read the history of God's people Israel, in the Bible or elsewhere, without noticing the strong desire for children which animated the heart of the Jewish mother.

"Lo, children and the fruit of the womb: are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord.

"Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant: even so are the young children.

"Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate." [3]

"Blessed are all they that fear the Lord: and walk in His ways.

"For thou shalt eat the labours of thine hands: O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be.

[1] Rev. xiv. 4. [2] See Prayer Book, Marriage Service.
[3] Ps. cxxvii. 4-6.

"Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine: upon the walls of thine house.

"Thy children like the olive-branches: round about thy table.

"Lo, thus shall the man be blessed: that feareth the Lord.

"The Lord from out of Sion shall so bless thee: that thou shalt see Jerusalem in prosperity all thy life long.

"Yea, that thou shalt see thy children's children: and peace upon Israel." [1]

Is it true that sometimes the modern bride asks that this psalm should not be sung at her wedding? It irks her to think of children, who will curtail her liberty and give her trouble. She has visions of days at home, of duties which she cannot altogether ignore, of times of enforced quiet and weakness. She has visions of possibilities how to ensure a small family.

And we read, alas! in our newspapers, the complaints of a diminished birth-rate, of race-suicide, and of national deterioration.

The Jews were a nation whose whole life was shaped by a promise. They looked forward to inherit the land which God had pledged Himself to give them in right of possession; and further, every Jewish bride viewed childlessness as a curse, inasmuch as it shut her off from the hope of being a personal link in the line of succession which was to issue in Messiah, the Child of Promise.

We must never cease to regard the foundation of a family as a sacred thing. It would not be difficult to show that over and over again God seems to bestow a special blessing on large families. The joys of fatherhood and motherhood are among the purest joys that are in the world.

> "A child, more than all other gifts,
> Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts." [2]

[1] Ps. cxxviii. [2] Wordsworth, *Michael.*

It is a sad sign of the times that men and women should be afraid of having large families, chiefly from the growth of a self-indulgent love of freedom, and a shrinking from the responsibilities of life. It has been said, " It is better for the children themselves and for the State that a large family should be trained in self-denial through the bracing discipline of home-life, than that a small family should be reared in ease and comfort."

There are cases, of course, in which the very life of the wife is involved, but for this there is only one remedy, and this remedy must be adopted rather than any in which there is obvious and certain sin.

There are also cases in the ordinary married life when a large family would mean improvidence and selfishness. But here, again, there is only one course to pursue, remembering always that holy marriage is a union of hearts, whose inward purpose it is to bind together the two in one in a union which signifies the mystical union which is betwixt Christ and His Church.

The sacramental mystery of marriage is a great truth which has many forms of expression. Mutual love which is rooted and grounded in what is the highest and noblest in man is something which can never be destroyed.

The marriage union from which God has withheld the blessing of offspring is a matter which rests with Him, and is entirely in His hands. After all, this result is but one of the objects of Holy Marriage, which seeks to realise a glorious spiritual fact, namely, the knitting together of two human beings in harmony of soul and body through the power of love. The issue is with God.

But a case in which God Himself withholds the blessing of offspring is a very different thing to a case in which an endeavour is made to frustrate one of the great objects for which matrimony was ordained by those who are not afraid so to outrage His laws.

"As many children," it has been said, "so many 'Our Fathers.'" Children are no playthings. They are a solemn trust and a serious care. There is a sacredness in child-life, both soul and body, which is a blessing to the house where they are.

So Holy Scripture, speaking of Samuel, says, "But Samuel ministered before the Lord—a child."[1] A child-like child—as if there were nothing more to say.

The author of *Lorna Doone* says, "If I love anything in the world foremost, I love children. They warm and yet cool our hearts, as we think of what we were and what in young clothes we hoped to be, and how many things have come across, and to see our motives moving in the little things that know not what their aim or object is, must always, or ought, at least, to lead us home and soften us. For either end of life is home, both source and issue being God."

There is hope in children. They represent to us the future. We would spare them what we have suffered. They remind us of our better selves; they seem to voice for us the prayer, "O Lord, make me what I might have been, if I had never sinned."

When the Spartans, we are told, were once asked to give ten of their children as hostages to the enemy, they said, "We would rather give you a hundred of our best men. We have failed, they may succeed. We have dishonoured our country, they may live to glorify it."

Nay, more: See the civilised world kneeling in adoration before an Infant carried in His Virgin Mother's arms, born of who one had the sanctity of virginity and yet the glory of motherhood. Here is innocence in all its beauty. Here is the capacity for happiness, here is the heart open to the voice of God, which speaks to a hearing ear and calls the child.

[1] 1 Sam. ii. 18.

After all, in the lives of most of us, is there any experience stronger and more blessed than this, as we think of our own childhood and its heavenly vision, and when in old age we wait for the breaking of the day?

> " And with the morn those angel-faces smile
> Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile." [1]

But there is another cause for which matrimony was ordained: in the same words of the Prayer Book, that men and women might " keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's Body." It is a sad retrospect, as we cast our thoughts back over the history of the world, from the time when man and woman forsook their first innocency and took of the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil. Polygamy appears, divorce is allowed because of the hardness of men's hearts; men and women seek for partners in their follies and sins, and no longer for the helpmeet for them. And yet here, too, there are beautiful examples of conjugal fidelity and loving help. When in the Marriage Service God is approached to bless the newly-married pair, the example of Isaac and Rebecca living the faithful life is appealed to, and the blessing of the Almighty upon Abraham and Sarah is recalled as an earnest of the blessing which He knows how to bestow.

And yet there is the mark of deterioration destroying the ideal of married purity in hateful polygamy culminating in Solomon, the lurid sunset of whose sensual life seems to overwhelm the bright sunrise of his God-given wisdom.

Who is there, who studies the classics, as he reads the splendid poetry of the ancient world, or the satires which mock at its moral corruption, or the history of the times of pagan licence, who can fail to be struck with the complete subversion of all ideas of purity and love, in so far as they are represented in the popular conceptions of the relations of man and woman?

[1] Newman, *The Pillar of the Cloud.*

Venus and Cupid seem to be the deification of human corruption and lust. And what are we to say to-day as to the literature which is to be found on the tables of society, in the plays which are to be seen in our theatres, in the sights and sounds which dominate our streets ?

The appeal made to all Christians to remain undefiled members of Christ's Body opens up a whole vista of hopes and fears, of possibilities of which men hardly dare to dream. St. Paul in a well-known passage is represented as speaking of "our vile body," [1] which seems to be very far removed from the undefiled membership of Christ's holy Body. But St. Paul is probably misrepresented in translation. What he would say to us and convey by this expression is rather "the body of our humiliation," as one who mourns the spoiling of a splendid inheritance. And yet these two translations by learned men, of the same phrase, show how the public opinion of the world vacillates between these two aspects of the body. It is either, as it has been described, "the nearest camp to the enemy," or else, as another has spoken of it, "the body as our friend."

And I cannot think that it is doubtful, although from time to time the voice may falter, in view of the degradation and insults which from time to time envelop it, that the Christian regards the body as a dignified and precious possession. Something which if in its origin needs purification, is susceptible of dedication and re-dedication unto God.

It is not a little remarkable to notice the courageous way, so to speak, in which Christianity as a system treats the body.

Everywhere in the world around them, when the first preachers of the Gospel were proclaiming the religion of the Incarnation, the degradation of the body had become a science and a religion. The world is bad enough now, God

[1] Phil. iii. 21.

knows—our large cities cannot afford to throw stones at the foulest centres of ancient vice. But there is this difference: bad as we are, when the sinner sins he knows for the most part that it is sin; but in those days vice was part of the national religion. The gods and goddesses whom men worshipped, if they worshipped anything, were viler than the man himself.

It must have required some courage, then, in the Christian teacher, to treat the body with respect. There must have been a tendency, as we see in the case of the early heretics, either to neglect or to ignore it. "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." [1]

But St. Paul would rather exhort his converts to present their "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." [2] He would beseech them to glorify God in their bodies, as well as in their spirits. [3] He would pray that their whole spirit and soul and body might be "preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." [4] And so Christianity, when it is true to its great name, is ever presenting the body to the Lord. It treats the body with honour and respect, and as we contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation we feel how the body has for ever been dignified by that wondrous tabernacling of the Word in the womb of blessed Mary.

He took not on Him the nature of angels, but was made man. [5]

And yet we are apt to cry, as we look around us, "Poor human nature!"

Surely there is a fundamental mistake in the popular excuse for sin that it is "natural." The mistake lies in the idea that man's animal nature and spiritual nature are

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 3. [2] Rom. xii. 1. [3] 1 Cor. vi. 20.
[4] 1 Thess. v. 23. [5] Heb. ii. 16.

separate, that he can live as a mere animal in one part of his life and as pure spirit in another. But as a fact man's life is only lived "according to nature" when every part of it is alive with true vitality in flesh and in spirit. The spiritual motive must control the bodily impulse. Only so, it has been said, are his acts really human. The lower animals are kept in check by instinct; man is checked by his spiritual faculties. You can have a dissipated man—that is, a man whose bodily impulses are uncontrolled by will or spirit—but you cannot have a dissipated animal.

It would surely be a terrible thing to look upon marriage as legalised sin, or as a concession to moral incompetence. It is rather the joyful and noble action of one who realises that the body is "for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." [1]

And there is yet a third reason assigned for this ordinance as instituted by God. Holy Marriage was ordained "for the mutual society, help and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity." [2]

The mutual promise between the man and the woman, as they stand before God, runs as follows: "to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance." [3]

A true marriage shows the fulness which is implied in complete sympathy and union of hearts. The giving of Himself for the Church by Christ is held up as an example to them of the self-denial and the giving out of self incident to this holy estate. He who marries must prepare himself, and the wife must not shrink from it, for possible times of sickness and long separation. He will find that those

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 13. [2] Marriage Service, Prayer Book.
[3] Prayer Book.

words which are so lightly spoken have a way of developing themselves in directions which he never contemplated: "For better, for worse" may carry with it times of enforced separation in the changes and chances of this mortal life. Home life, during the dark times of the late war, turned in the case of many into a tragedy which they could barely have faced had it been shown to them amidst the joy and festivities, the gladness and the promise which opened up before them when as bride and bridegroom they left the church. He did not foresee the long weariness of trench and battlefield, face to face with death, and she saw nothing of those days of sickening suspense when "in the morning," she would say, "would God it were even!" and at even would say, "Would God it were morning!" for the fear of her heart wherewith she would fear, and for the sight of her eyes which she would see. [1]

"For richer, for poorer" may suddenly discover a sinister meaning, and even bring a deadly temptation to sin, as the family begins to grow, and distrust and fear of the ways of God set in. It is humiliating to think of the power and influence of home comforts, as has been brought home to so many by the expense and extravagance of the times in which we live,when "what shall we eat and what shall we drink and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" have hung like a cloud round the happy home, only to be borne by mutual cheerfulness, determination, and forbearance.

"In sickness and in health" brings with it long times of weariness and trouble, far removed from the joys of the so-called honeymoon.

Once again the war has brought home to us, on a large scale, some of the tenderest and yet most severe tests of mutual love which can arise in the unchanged devotion, which gazes on the maimed limbs, the clouded brain, the sightless eyes with unshaken constancy:

[1] Deut. xxviii. 67.

" But a smooth and steadfast mind,
Gentle thoughts and calm desires,
Hearts with equal love combined
Kindle never-dying fires." [1]

And death waits beyond, which regards neither youth nor love; and the widower and the widow have to learn the lesson of the severed life, the harder perhaps to master by reason of the past happiness.

The changes and chances of life must be taken into earnest consideration by anyone who looks to the circumstances of his condition to change his temper, and not to the will strengthened by God's grace.

It is this and not marriage which will steady the wild waywardness of youth and teach the young man the lessons of manly self-control. Marriage is the sacred union of man and woman in a divine sacrament, not the legalising of youthful lusts, so as to make that honourable which before was base, or to make that the mark of soberness and chastity which before was the result of a dishonourable licence.

Shakespeare, in his *Merchant of Venice*, has taken over an old Latin legend of the king who wished to test the worthiness of her who aspired to be the bride of his son. He set before her three sealed caskets, one of which she had to choose. The first was made of gold, enriched with precious stones, but within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness, and on it was inscribed, " Whoso chooseth me shall find that he deserveth." The second was made of silver filled with earth and worms, and on it was written, " Whoso chooseth me shall find that his nature desireth." The third was made of lead, full within of precious stones, and its superscription was, " Whoso chooseth me shall find that God hath disposed to him." The maiden, having prayed to God, and feeling that He never could dispose any harm, chooses the vessel of lead, by the grace of God, and so proves worthy to marry the prince.

[1] Carew.

Marriage with us to-day still retains much of its ancient sanctity and honour. Let us think well of the causes for which God ordained it, and pray that our young men and maidens may prove worthy of this heavenly gift. The welfare and integrity of England depends largely on the integrity of her sons and daughters, as the fathers and mothers of England yet to be, to uphold the dignity and beauty of her honoured homes, unsullied by divorce.

IV

THE CARE OF CHILDREN

If children are not encumbrances to be avoided, certainly they are not playthings to be spoiled.

They are a family pride and a national treasure, and part of God's agency for carrying on the world.

Education at this moment is one of the things which is in the air, and seeks to take a place among our interests, and to attract a hearing in the Babel of cries which is resounding through the nation. It is a subject which is even more important to the national welfare than taxes or wages, or the strife of parties or foreign and domestic complications.

And therefore with the birth of a child there dawns upon the father and mother a great responsibility. The child has to be trained. Their own experience meets them, the State appeals to them, the Bible encourages them, as it says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." [1]

The parents could not receive better advice than this. In the first place, it is the voice of God, and then all experience combines to show that we have in these inspired words the principle of all real education, which parents would do well to lay to heart, that it is, or should be, a training of the young impressionable child in the true and

1 Prov. xxii. 6.

right path, to which if his steps have once become accustomed we may trust him to walk in it, even to his old age.

Here, as we are dealing with one of the greatest responsibilities of married life, it would be well to enquire and to realise what training really is and, what for is education, they both mean the same thing.

Training is, we may suppose, the leading or drawing forth, the exercising of the powers of the mind, the passions, the affections, the dispositions, habits and manners, not forgetting the mysterious power of the spirit which is in us. It is the putting the child of God in that road in which by the grace of God he may realise himself and discharge that portion of work for which God has furnished him and has allowed his parents to bring him into the world.

It is well, however, to pause at the outset, that we may assure ourselves that human nature does require a training. There is a large region of popular thought in which restraint represents slavery, and licence is the highest liberty. There are those who think that education is but the portal to open the door which leads to the rich gardens of scientific discovery and useful knowledge, in which the unfettered mind may walk at will, adapting the Bible to the wisdom of the present day, modifying and expurgating the creeds in the light of modern research, that the scholar may emerge at last the thoroughly instructed and well-informed man, following out the bent of his nature.

But on consideration it will appear that common human experience, as well as the experience of experts, tends to show that a child is not the simple being which it might seem to be. It becomes evident that here is a living creature born into the world with a threefold nature, delicately and wonderfully adjusted, a nature which we know as consisting of body, soul, and spirit; and that, further, he needs to be trained in the right use and development of each and all of these constituent parts.

Our Blessed Lord spoke for all times the parable of the Prodigal Son. He there sets forth the picture of a young man who cast away all restraint and all training, and let his lower passions get complete possession of him. It is easy to see the overwhelming power of lust, gluttony, and dissipation as solvents of all human excellence. But He also sets in the back of the parable the elder son, well-regulated, well-instructed, industrious, a man who knew what his work was worth and expected his father to recognise it. We must own that he is an unpopular character: the world would call him a prig, and the generous-minded would call him selfish and inhuman. Of the two we seem to prefer the prodigal. Why? Because the elder son was lacking in restraint of the soul, as the younger was in the restraint of the body. We must take care, if by God's grace we can keep the child from profligacy and rioting; still, if he is not trained, he may grow up deficient in love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and the higher virtues. He may be what the world calls a successful man, but deficient in all those higher qualities which he has never been taught to develop.

The child who had been brought up in a State-aided school, who asked his father when he was going to die that he might have more money coming to him which he might put into the Savings Bank, is, after all, perhaps, a more contemptible being than he who asks his father for his portion of goods that he may spend it in riotous living.

Human nature is like a tree which needs constant pruning and checking, restraining and binding up. One may see the so-called liberty of nature in the nearest hedge which surrounds the well-ordered and cultivated garden.

Further, human nature is one of those plants which need binding closely to some prop, being dependent on others

for the development of its powers of growth, fertility, and fruitfulness.

Further still, it must be noticed that a training of some sort goes on with everybody. If the child does not go to school, he is trained, so to speak, in the road. He is trained by circumstances, as we call them—that is, his environment. He is trained by the careless father and mother, by evil companions, by bad sights and sounds; he is trained down and down, drawn out of his path, twisted, contorted, deformed out of his proper self, until the poor little life, deprived of all its props and stays, all checking and restraining, seizes upon, fastens and winds itself around the stones, the mud, the decay of life, in which it lies trailing on the ground.

Human nature is a climbing plant, and therefore needs a prop and training if it is to bear fruit and not to incur the dreadful judgment, "Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?"[1]

And there follows upon this a question of serious and solemn obligation.

God sends into this world thousands and thousands of little creatures endowed with powers and capacities, each, in some way, with his own mysterious message to deliver. Marriage, as has been already seen, was ordained for this very purpose.

There they are, with bodies exquisitely planned, with souls whereby they may know God, capable of feeling out after Him and finding Him; in which His own divine Spirit may dwell; with a sovereign will which can all too easily be captured and enslaved. There lies before them an eternal destiny, and before they reach it a wilderness, and the dark river of death. They have an absolute freedom to choose between life and death, blessing and cursing. And these creatures are thrown upon the world to train.

[1] St. Luke xiii. 7.

Who is to take up this great responsibility? Who is to cut the stakes and bring the props? Who is to nail up those tender shoots on the sunny wall? Who is to lift them up from the ground, and put them in the right direction? Is it to be left to chance, to circumstances, to the philanthropy of kind people? To the National Government?

It is clear from God's Holy Word that ever since God has taken in hand the restoration of fallen man, this is a solemn duty which He has left to His Church. It was laid upon the rulers of His people.

"He made a covenant with Jacob, and gave Israel a law: which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children;

"That their posterity might know it: and the children which were yet unborn;

"To the intent that when they came up: they might shew their children the same."[1]

It is not necessary to enlarge on the teaching, training, educating office of the Jewish Church.

God speaks, He gives His deposit of faith to this man, this family, this tribe, with the solemn obligation of handing it on.

It is so with the Christian Church. "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."[2]

The great office of the Church has been and is to teach, to train, and to hand on the Faith.

And this is not a duty which the Church may neglect, or hold in abeyance. She may not think to serve God by

[1] Ps. lxxviii. 5-7.
[2] St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20 (*R.V.*).

elaborate worship and gorgeous churches, while she neglects her schools.

The child's good requires it ; we are not justified in withholding from it its proper nourishment. Each generation has to be the trainer of the next. The torch of truth must be handed on, and it will be our condemnation if its flame expires in our hands.

The good of the community requires it. When the Church teaches she is spreading the only sound principles of moral dealing, of justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude. When the Church teaches she is laying her hand on ages yet to come, levelling the hills, filling up the valleys, making the way straight for the coming of Christ.

More especially she is fulfilling her duty. God has put into our hands the word of truth ; we have besides a precious book of experience, a true book of precepts. We have the props and stays on which human nature can be trained in the truth of God's holy commandments, so that sanctified human nature may take root and fill the land with a vine of rich and precious fruit.

Anyone whose lot it has been to teach in the public elementary schools before the Education Act of 1870 was passed, will testify to the vigorous effort which the Church of England, in her recovered life, was then making in the cause of national education. And it is impossible not to feel that it is but a scanty recognition of that which was then so splendidly and unselfishly done, to view with contempt, suspicion, and partisan opposition (which is still, alas ! virulent) that great effort which had almost saved the cause of education in troublous times. We must not hesitate to claim for the Church of England that in any fresh scheme of national education, however excellent, her rights may be respected, in view at least of the great past, in which at a huge sacrifice of energy, time, and money she did her utmost for the cause of learning. This surely

should be gratefully accepted, without any stigma of denominational selfishness.

Here is a duty which we own, and a right which we claim as belonging to the Church, to train up the child in the way he should go, to lay hold of generation after generation of God's children, and lead them in the way everlasting.

But how is this to be done ?

Certainly the child will need more teachers than one. And among the first and the most important we put the child's father and mother.

A headmaster of one of our great schools, not so many years ago, emphasised in a book which he published the fact of the great burden which is too often laid upon the after teachers of the child by the neglect of training at home.

Would that this responsibility were more realised in our homes to-day. As it is, when the Church hands back the child at the font to the parents and godparents, she cannot but feel that in many cases she is entrusting him to sorry teachers and trainers of those all-important years. It is but of little use to say, " Ye shall call upon them to hear sermons," [1] when there is a sermon preached at home, day by day, which issues from the godless and selfish life, which falls, alas ! on those little ears which eagerly drink in the lesson.

Who shall estimate the importance of the home-training which the child receives as the first stage of education ? Here those courtly qualities are to be brought out which are latent in him, such as the parents of Moses, we are told, recognised in their child.[2] Here he is to be taught what is meant by " a citizen of heaven," " the proper child," " the child exceeding fair." Here he is to be taught the

[1] Prayer Book, Publick Baptism.

[2] Heb. xi. 23 ; Acts vii. 20.

alphabet of heavenly life and the two great lessons which home can teach—obedience and reverence. "Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." [1]

Here the child may learn obedience, which is to carry his youthful steps safely through the first and early temptations of life, as safely as if they did not exist. Not to touch, not to taste, not to handle, not to leave the straight path; obedience, with its pledges to renounce, to believe, and to do, under the guidance of a loving eye.

Obedience and reverence, these are the first steps which lead the child of God by easy stages up to the citizenship of heaven. For in heaven, we may believe, everyone fits into his proper place; some rule and some are ruled; some have authority over ten cities, some over five; there one star differs from another star in glory: yet every star has its place and "every part of heaven is Paradise." [2]

It was this lesson that Satan had failed to learn when rebellion hurled him down in his lightning fall from heaven. It was this lesson that our Blessed Lord proclaimed so earnestly, when at Nazareth He was subject to His earthly parents, Himself a learner, Himself a teacher. Here is the first lesson which can never be learned so fully or so easily afterwards as at home: to obey and to reverence and to learn how to take that place in life unto which in His good providence God shall afterwards call His child.

We may well ask whether parents are doing their duty in this respect? We know how in humbler spheres of society the parents think they have done wonders if they ship their children off to a Sunday-school, where they will be kept out of mischief and be taken to church while the parents stay at home. And so it is to be feared that it will be found among those who live in another condition of society:

[1] Ex. xx. 12. [2] Dante, *Paradiso* iii. 88.

there is an unhallowed desire to shift responsibility upon others and to leave to strangers the elementary and necessary duties which should have been done at home.

In an age like this, characterised by terrible selfishness, it would seem to be almost a natural instinct to shrink from anything which may give trouble. Discipline involves, perhaps, disagreeable scenes, assertion of authority, and the like ; and so the child is allowed to stumble on as best he can, with faults uncorrected, habits of obedience unformed, unaware of his danger, unconscious of his helps, unassisted in forming his ideals.

An indolent parent need never be at a loss for a formula to justify him in his masterly inaction, which he dignifies by the idea of a permitted natural development in the perceptive powers of his child.

Among the many foolish ideas which prevail from time to time, one of the most foolish is that which induces a man to believe that it is his duty to leave his child in the absolutely unbiassed choice of what he will believe and what he will do (of course, within limits), and what he will choose as his ultimate end in life.

Doubtless it is a sorry thing to see the worldly parent inculcating self-denial in the child, or the indolent father proclaiming the need of work for God, or the unbelieving or irreverent father teaching the child to read the Bible which he himself despises, to recite the Creed which he himself disbelieves or says symbolically, or to realise the importance of public worship from which he himself habitually abstains.

" Do as I say, not as I do " is a miserable formula, which is bound to fail in its effects and recoil on the head of him who utters it. But for all this, God has given to the parents the power of authority. He has given them the unique power of love and affection ; He has given them experience, that treasure from which it is easy to borrow

much which it is expensive to buy, that book some of whose pages are written in letters of blood.

And if parents fail in imparting their experiences, if they withhold their love and withdraw their authority, then they have been false to a great trust ; they have failed to impart that which is the first stage in a good education : the teaching and training of a Christian home. Here is our first line of teachers.

But the child has to take his place in the world's competitions, and the Church has to provide other teachers beside the home, who may impart what is known as useful knowledge.

And here the child is like to be torn in pieces by rival claimants, some of them not always disinterested. For what is useful knowledge ? Is it knowledge which may be turned into pounds, shillings, and pence ? Is it knowledge which may satisfy one part of a man's being, his head—his mind ? Is it knowledge which will last a man for thirty, forty, or even eighty years of his life ? Surely to reckon only for this is to do an addition sum leaving out the top line, and that a top line which contains some very big figures.

It is a great thing to start in life well furnished for the struggle of competition. Professional life has many prizes for the successful combatant. Earth has its honours, its riches, its excitements. But still there looms up in the distance the figures of old age and death—and what then ?

Theoretically, most people would not hesitate to affirm as a belief that when a man dies he does not cease to live, that this world is not the end. But still, what then ? Beyond the lucrative posts, the coveted honours, the well-cushioned life—what then ?

Useful knowledge we may take to be knowledge which may be of use to a man, the whole man, through time and through eternity. It is knowledge which will act as a prop

and stay as each new tendril unfolds itself. Knowledge, scientific imagination, a well-stored mind, these are splendid endowments, they add a fulness and a value to life. Culture refinement, artistic and scientific development are splendid things, but they do not exhaust the fulness of useful knowledge.

A thoughtful man cannot but own that there is a feeling of great disappointment hanging over us. Education has not done all that it was expected to do.

There are abundant evidences of devoted work, a prodigious expenditure lavished on every kind of scientific training, and yet what is the general result ?

There are obviously certain lurid facts which frighten us, one of which is the sad prevalence of juvenile crime, and the present terribly low state of public morality. And yet at the same time there appears to be a great longing after religion—an intense desire to get at truth, a righteous discontent with things as they are, and this combined with a feeling-out for the world beyond the grave, even by unhallowed man. What, then, is the matter ? Who is to blame ?

It is evident to everyone but the bitter partisan that certain panaceas have failed. We have been told a great deal about the regenerating effects of culture, art, and poetry; the pursuit of the true, the beautiful, and the good are to work wonders. Children seeing the true will at once hate falsehood; seeing the ugliness of vice they will cleave to virtue; seeing the superiority of goodness they will at once follow it. Little children with note-books and pencils in their hands may be seen wandering about, recording their impressions of art and architecture for future digestion, with occasional lapses into a picture theatre of crude sensationalism. England is not the first nation that has appealed to culture, or said to art, " These be thy gods, O Israel." In the events of the late war, we have surely

seen in Germany, the great exponent of culture and learning, the utter deterioration which too surely settles down on a nation which forgets God. Education divorced from religion, from the love and knowledge of God, can only degrade and not elevate those who forsake Him, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Culture and refinement are beautiful expressions of the soul from within, shed forth from the inner life. But they cannot be learned from handbooks nor borrowed from museums, and in themselves are but a poor protection in meeting the overpowering forces which are marshalled against us.

We are led, again, to expect a great deal from the teaching of morality. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, divested of His glory as God, is to be set before the youth of our land as a great teacher of moral precepts, as One Who was fond of children and kind to animals. His precepts are to commend themselves to the bunch of passions, impulses, desires, reason and fantasy, waywardness and obstinacy which we associate with human nature. Our children are to study in the newspapers and elsewhere the awful consequences of sin, and, like Ulysses, tied to the mast of public opinion, they are to hear the sirens without the power of following them.

It has been gravely proposed to teach publicly in class to children the great mysteries of physical life. But it is difficult to imagine how anyone with a shred of imagination or an ounce of experience could gravely propose this promiscuous inoculation with disease against the approach of fever. It is a course which would seem at once to be destructive of innocence and powerless against vice.

It is well to remember that childhood has a definite place in the development of life. It is not good to make children old before they are young. We can purchase forced fruit, but it is a poor thing, after all. We can eat strawberries in

England at Christmas, but they are but tasteless things. Childhood, we may be sure, is a stage in the true education of the man.

It is a dangerous thing to risk losing entirely the unique and precious grace of innocence, even if it be rare. If children are to be warned, let it be one by one, with the greatest care, by parent or guardian or doctor, always fearful lest they should break down where they meant to preserve, lest, while they turn out the intellectual prodigy, they at the same time produce the child who has lost the protection and reserve of childhood. For, so taught, the child at the best may become fearful and suspecting, where he ought to be fearless and trustful, looking out for evil where before he would never have expected it, until he grows up a moral valetudinarian, as one who has learned the use of the clinical thermometer and is always taking his own temperature.

We shall never get education to give satisfactory results in the training of the whole man until we have put religion back into its true place as the dominating factor in all training. We do not want even to keep it behind the barrier of a conscience-clause, or to shut it off in the restricted area of a grudged place on the school time-table.

Our Blessed Lord was more than a teacher, He was God. As God He made human nature, and as God He seeks to regenerate it. He knows, if we do not, that it is not sufficient to show what is right without also giving the means for doing it. He has emphasised, and would have us provide against the terrible bias towards evil which is a heritage of humanity; and while He gives us the scheme of His Holy Church, which deals with such questions as heredity and environment, in the only way in which they can adequately be dealt with, He points out to all teachers who work for Him that they may calculate on a wonderful capacity for religion in the young child.

And therefore the Church does not hesitate to Baptise infants and Confirm the child before as yet he has gone out into the world.

So, as one of the greatest duties imposed upon parents, there stands out this : to train the child, to show him the way of righteousness, his privileges, his blessings, and his strength. And this is one of the supreme responsibilities of married life.

V

MARRIAGE AND THE GREAT HEREAFTER

When our Blessed Lord was confronted by the Sadducees with what they considered a *reductio ad absurdum*[1] as regards the resurrection turning on the married life, He replied that "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." We have, then, the highest authority for saying that marriage is no mere earthly arrangement which ceases with the world, so carnal that it cannot exist in the pure atmosphere of Heaven, so human that the presence of angels would prohibit its obvious worldliness.

God forbid that we should ever think so, or so twist the words of the Eternal Truth. We remember how again and again He is described under the simile of the bridegroom. It is He Who has spoken in His parable and told us how the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.[2] Again, we read such words as these, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb."[3] It is a golden thread woven in and out of the imagery of the joys of Heaven.

It would be incredible that we should be taught to feel that marriage was something carnal, unclean, transitory, or unworthy. Rather we should believe that in it we must seek for some type of union which has a spiritual equivalent

[1] St. Matt. xxii. 23. [2] St. Matt. xxii. 2. [3] Rev. xix. 9.

and currency in Heaven, and that its absolute indissolubility here is a type of its eternal permanency and value hereafter. So our Blessed Lord honoured it, when on earth, with His first miracle that He wrought in Cana of Galilee, and with His presence at the marriage feast. So, as we have seen, His apostle St. Paul calls it a great mystery or sacrament,[1] being a union unlike any other union on earth, to be understood only by the union of Christ with His Church.

So the Church calls it "holy," and cements the union with the precious food of the Body and Blood of Christ received at the Altar.

If we may reverently enquire into the meaning of Christ's answer to the Sadducees, it would seem to be an answer which we should do well to ponder now. For the life hereafter is not a mere reproduction of this; marriage there and marriage here are different in their accessories if not in their essence.

Surely they would do well to study this answer, who in trying to snatch at messages from the unseen (for seeking which they have no sanction) only hear the echoes of their own voices in so-called messages clothed in the language of this poor earth, whose gross materialism and incongruity would be sometimes ludicrous if they were not so painful.

Perhaps we may say, if we look upon marriage as a sacrament in a wide sense, that the outward part passes away with this life, while the inward part remains. Just as we may say, when the heavenly manna ceases in the Promised Land, the outward veil of the Sacrament of the Altar will pass away, and Christ's Presence with His Church remain real, actual, and visible, in the fulness of life above.

It was the beautiful benediction of the old world breathed over the man and woman, in the first joys of their union, "May they grow old together." And this, perhaps, is the

[1] Eph. v. 32.

full blessing of those who enter with all their hearts into the meaning of this holy estate, that as they grow older their love grows deeper, the marriage union displays its richer blessing, until in the unity of the Faith they come to the fuller knowledge of the verities of life, and being planted in the house of the Lord, flourish now in the courts of the house of their God.

What is it, then, which passes away at death in the marriage state ?

Obviously all that has to do with the "body of our humiliation."[1] Here with body, soul, and spirit we correspond with an earthly environment, there with a spiritual. There is an earthly body and there is a spiritual body. The Sadducees were asking a foolish question and, like so many disputants, were making a difficulty where there was none. This is clear and obvious. They were thinking of a world of men and women ; our Blessed Lord was speaking of a world inhabited by angels, and by those who, like the angels, were *spirits*.

But we may say even more than this. In those who are accounted worthy of that world to come all that is unworthy in the married life will have passed away.

It is idle to deny that there are many unworthy communicants in the Sacrament of Marriage. It is not a little remarkable to see how the devil has fastened on this God-like endowment of man, the power to reproduce life, and has laboured to dishonour it, to poison, it and to make that which should have been for man's wealth only an occasion of falling.

Speaking generally and to unknown readers, it is impossible to say all that should be said without risk of doing harm. But what conception of marriage must be his who, attracted by outward appearance, will take away another man's wife and by the connivance of a shameful law seek

[1] Phil. iii. 21.

by collusion eventually to make her his own wife, not knowing that this before God is impossible ?

What are we to say to marriages rashly undertaken with no thought, no prayer, no promise of solid virtues, but only on the ground of a mere passing attraction which will pass away as quickly as it came, but perhaps only after shame and sorrow have followed in the train of a heartless desertion?

What are we to say to what is now a commonplace of the newspapers, which it is unnecessary to particularise further than under its name of race-suicide ? It is not only that this brings a curse on the nation and deterioration of body and soul on those who are implicated, but that it stands for the very degradation of marriage in its essence. Marriage diverted from its true purpose has no vision of the life which is to come. Those who so grow old together have to answer before God for the degradation of a noble estate. And there are even worse evils than this, with which, alas ! we are becoming more and more familiar, where the punishment is no mere physical consequent, which medical science will guard against and dispel, but is a sign manifest to all men, in its terrible severity, that God has hedged round Holy Matrimony with a barrier of wrath.

The greatness of this punishment shows the greatness of the dignity which is being trampled underfoot by the sensual selfishness of men and women of corrupt minds.

Here is no marriage which will pass on into the mansions of eternal bliss, and, quite apart from this, we all know that marriage which was meant by a continual symbolism to lift up the heart to God, marriage which might be for ever reminding the father and the mother that they were workers together with God in perpetuating the human race and in providential care of the family, may very easily become a barrier and a hindrance to their religion. " I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come " [1] is the

[1] St. Luke xiv. 20.

unanswerable and almost the rude excuse—in the case of the man who refused to attend the supper of the king.

How many there are who are allowing the cares and troubles and joys of married life to be a hindrance in their religious approach to God. It is not only that there are Delilahs who sell their husbands to the Philistines, who cut off the locks of consecration to God as they clamour for worldly things and degrade any serious effort after the work which God has given them to do. It is not only that there are Marthas who seldom care to sit at Jesus' feet because they are enslaved by the careless and selfish husband who thinks only of his ease, his pleasures, and his comfort. Alas ! the sorrows, the hindrances, the disappointments of married life would fill a large chapter in a moral treatise on Matrimony. But no married life like this can hope for continuance in the heavenly courts. Nothing which is selfish will find a place there Here will be cast away "anything that defileth . . . or maketh a lie," [1] all unfaithfulness, all cruelty and neglect, all the miserable catalogue of unworthy actions which here call out for a separation and would fain bring about a divorce.

No, the married who have misused this holy estate as an excuse for unworthy passion ; those who have thought only of comfort and wealth and have forgotten God, those who have wasted life in pleasure and squandered it in sin, those who have neglected their responsibilities as father and mother, those who by their own fault know nothing of the wife as the fruitful vine on the walls of the house,[2] and "the children like the olive branches round about" their "table," these have no part or lot in the eternal union of Heaven, "for without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." [3]

[1] Rev. xxi. 27. [2] Ps. cxxviii. 1, 3, 4.
[3] Rev. xxii. 15.

The heavenly union is the lot of those who are called by marriage here to the marriage supper of the Lamb there. While "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." [1]

If all that is unworthy in marriage drops away what is it that remains in that eternal life beyond the grave to which as to a marriage supper the children of God are called?

There is no doubt that there passes through to the married life beyond the grave the eternal power of love We do not think enough of this virtue on which our Blessed Lord laid such stress. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." [2] "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." [3]

We know, again, that the fruit of the Spirit in its first development is love. The Apostle whom Jesus loved seems to exhibit in our Blessed Lord a preference for one above the other twelve, as if love meant more than general philanthropy and common kindness. And yet how much it has suffered! From the heathen world we seem to have taken over as a commonplace of affection between man and woman, Cupid the god of love: and yet anybody who knows Latin knows very well that *Cupido* does not mean love but its perversion. We think with something like weary aversion of the erotic poetry which in reality once more is but too often the expression of animal passion. Or love, even in religious treatises, or common parlance, seems to us but a cold and unreal thing. We fail to see what a strong power it is, a giving-out of self to God, to man, to nature.

"We live by admiration, hope and love."

Love is of God. God Himself is love, and here God

[1] Rev. xxii. 17. [2] St. John xiii. 35.
[3] St. John xiii. 34.

seems to have designed that in the union of man and woman in Holy Matrimony there should be a supreme exhibition of love, wherein self passes away in a life given to another, where each lives for the other, and both for God. Here on earth is the opportunity for realising a godlike virtue; there in heaven is an opportunity of living still as those who have mastered "the manner of the God of the land."[1] That is love in a kingdom of love.

Think once more what a promise it is which the bridegroom makes to the bride and the bride to her future husband. "I take thee . . . to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse . . ."[2] Here they are to be travelling companions whom no inequality of life is to upset. As we think of the trials which life can bring, as we remember what the upheaval of the late war has meant to many a household, we are able to realise the depth of the promise which ensures that with all their powers one shall help the other to bear a common trial with the added fortitude which comes from a united life.

"For richer or poorer." Let us think of those who may have here an opportunity of knowing how love rides supreme over the riches or poverty of life, and how a marriage for money where love depends on money or lands is but a poor thing destined to falsify itself.

"In sickness and in health." As we listen to the querulous complaints of the divorce court we can wonder at and admire the patient, unshaken love which sees the youthful beauty pass away in sickness, or the glorious strength quenched by some mortal weakness.

The promise so lightly made at the altar, so overwhelming in its sternness, is the guarantee that in marriage rightly undertaken in the fear of God shall emerge that perfect love which is supreme over all the troubles and trials of life and shall survive even death itself.

[1] II Kings xvii. 26. [2] Marriage Service.

Holy Matrimony is the parent of true love, and love endures beyond the grave when all else has failed; love which has ridden triumphantly over the rough road of change and human vicissitude; love which has refused to be tied down to earth by the weight of money or human cares; love which has faced ill-health, change, decay, the failure of all human brightness, to fasten on that which nothing can change, not even death itself.

The love of husband and wife can be, should be, nay, in many cases is, a wonderful and a sacred thing. Has not God Himself said, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee"? [1] Is it to be wondered at, therefore, that we shrink with loathing from the divorce court, where a man or woman thinks that inclination or whim or caprice, disappointment, incompatibility of temper, yes, or even betrayal may be allowed to trample in the dust the sacrament of love, and to show that this world is a place in which love with its self-abandonment has no part? Divorce seems to turn its back on Heaven, and to say that neither here nor there are men and women anything more than human beings who have neither time nor inclination to think of angels or of anything but self. The love of man and wife is a beautiful thing, an exposition of a heavenly virtue on earth.

But we associate with Holy Marriage also all that grand idea of home and family, of the love of parents for children, of children for their parents. One of the saddest things connected with this hateful divorce court is the sight of poor little children deprived of father or mother, or both, and tainted with the horror of a dishonoured family: so many goods or chattels to be assigned by law to this or the other out of the ruin of what might have been a happy home.

Here we hope again that in Heaven the love which

[1] Isa. lxii. 5.

gathers round home here as well as that which gathers round man and wife, will also have its counterpart there. Heaven is a wide home with its many mansions, even if we may not press the metaphor. "Behold," we say as we stand before God, "I and the children whom the Lord hath given me."[1]

St. Paul when speaking to Philemon of his slave, now a son in the faith, says, "Perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved."[2]

It is a question which is being eagerly asked, Will there be a place for family relationships in heaven?

Speaking generally, we cannot but feel that God, Who has for ever honoured the relationship of father and son in the mystery of the Godhead, will honour and recognise this relationship in its earthly manifestation, when it is true and righteous and in accordance with His will.

And further we feel also that our human cravings cannot deceive us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ in His parable has told us of the anxieties and hopes which existed in the breast of Dives in the other world, for his brethren still struggling here. And the hope of recognition hereafter is implanted firmly in the human breast. Surely we may look forward in earnest hope that we shall meet again, and know and love in the fulness of its meaning, those who have gone on before us, and that the Bible phrase is no unmeaning form of words, "He was gathered unto his people,"[3] or, this or that man "slept with his fathers."[4]

Surely we may hope and believe that as the husband and wife look forward to a fuller recognition in Heaven as those who have learnt the meaning of true love, so the father and mother, with their children, may feel that here too is an

[1] Isa. viii. 18. [2] Phil. 15, 16.
[3] Gen. xxv. 8. [4] 1 Kings ii. 10.

extension of their own lives, and that with their children around them in the heavenly home they may realise that of which life here was but a faint image, a great life yet to be in the family of God in the Father's house in heaven.

They are "as the angels," [1] says the Lord. Perhaps we do not think enough of that unselfish life which is grouped round the throne of God.

Men have gathered out of the Bible a vision of mighty orders of Angels, Cherubin and Seraphin, who wait upon His Majesty—Angels and Archangels who do God's will in ministering to men and to the needs of this world—beings who live wholly and only in and for God.

And with them is to be associated hereafter an order, as it were, of men.

Here are they who, like God the Father, have taken their part in making this world a better place than it is.

Here are they who have dignified and advanced the sacred gift of life, men who in their way have imitated God, as the fathers, the originators and protectors of what is true and beautiful and good. Here are men and women, enthusiastic in the cause of God, who have lived and worked and loved, who have known that life was not given them to squander in pleasures, or in vain pursuit of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

Here are those who have known the love of the Saviour, and, like Him, have taken up the cross daily that they might help fallen humanity.

Here are they who in married life have manfully borne the worse, where they might have hoped for the better.

Here are they who have faithfully borne the trials of hard fortune, as it is called—who in riches have known what it is to be poor, who in poverty have known what it is to be rich in good works and in patient submission to all the inequalities of life.

[1] St. Matt. xxii. 30.

Here are they who have known in their own lives and in the lives of those they love, sickness as well as health, and have patiently endured and not made haste in the time of trouble. To them God has spoken, "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of trouble. Cleave unto Him, and depart not away, that thou mayest be increased at thy last end. Whatsoever is brought upon thee take cheerfully, and be patient when thou art changed to a low estate. For gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity. Believe in Him, and He will help thee; order thy way aright, and trust in Him. . . . Ye that fear the Lord, hope for good, and for everlasting joy and mercy . . . Woe unto you that have lost patience! and what will ye do when the Lord shall visit you?" [1]

Here are they, once more, who have known in their own lives the power of the Holy Ghost. In them has grown up the fruit of the Spirit in their hearts. Love in all its unselfish magnificence has been wrought out in them; theirs is the joy in the Lord which the world could neither give nor take away; theirs is the peace of God which passeth all understanding, which has kept their hearts and minds through life's tumult; long-suffering to others, they have experienced the tender mercies of God; theirs is true gentleness; they are declared to be the children of God. Faith has upheld them, meekness has kept them unspotted from the world, and temperance has ruled their hearts and governed their desires, so that they stand faultless before the throne of God. Here is that band of the Redeemed strong in love and in the fear of God. In the life of the world they have forgotten self in love. In the life of heaven they are as the angels who wait on Him, the King of Kings whose service is perfect freedom.

[1] Ec. ii. 1, etc.

God has given us the precious gift of Holy Marriage as one of the great pillars of society. It is the duty of everyone earnestly to contend against any tampering with it in the direction of divorce, wherein man attempts to put asunder those whom God by matrimony has made one, and to violate His laws.

While as to those who are married or who would reverence marriage for their children, it must ever be their endeavour to bring forward, to cultivate and honour those things which will remain in the eternal life of heaven. It is for them to cast aside all unworthy conceptions, all wrong and degrading customs, to set in the forefront that perfect love which shall continue when all else falls away. And to preserve for England that foundation and bulwark of her national life which has made her great in the past, and will preserve her integrity for years to come.

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